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Introduction: intimacy-geopolitics and violence

Mapping the relations between intimacy and geopolitics is gathering momentum within critical geopolitics. Both world events and geographical research have demonstrated the importance of politicized understandings of intimacy (Harker and Martin 2012; Oswin and Olund 2010; Smith 2011), and of dissolving the customary boundaries between global/local, familial/state and personal/political as objects of study (Cowen and Story 2013; Mountz and Hyndman 2006; Pain and Smith 2008; Pratt and Rosner 2006; Pratt 2012). This collection is prompted by the growth of interest in intimacy-geopolitics¹, but also by a wish to push understanding forwards, both of the ambivalence of intimacy itself (Harker 2013) and of the common framing of intimacy-geopolitics as a binary (see Pratt and Rosner 2012). We interrogate the ways that intimacy-geopolitics is tightly interwoven, and *how* this relation functions in different settings. In this introduction, we make some suggestions for how this might be framed. Each of the seven short essays that follow takes a particular cut across this relation within a specific geographical context; together, the collection intends to provide a series of conceptual, empirical and methodological questions and provocations for further research.

violence-

The focus is violence, a key theme for intimacy-geopolitics. Understood as a multi-faceted and multi-sited force - interpersonal and institutional, social, economic and political, physical, sexual, emotional and psychological - violence is endemic, and intimately interwoven with other sorts of relations. For example, Pratt's (2012) analysis of transnational care-giving shows that the different violences, to which care-givers are subject, cut across conventional bounds of places and scales, connected by political relations that traverse the intimate and geopolitical. Indeed, intimate violence may be tacitly or explicitly sanctioned by states and institutions.

And crucially, it does not rest on physical harm to bodies; while this threat is almost always at its core, all forms of violent oppression work through intimate emotional and psychological registers as a means of exerting control (Pain forthcoming). This dynamic is often closely linked to wider social norms, obligations and customs, and to economic relations (Hays-Mitchell 2005). In this way, violence plays a key role in the oppression and insecurities that disproportionately affect socially, economically and politically marginalised people and places. At the same time, resistance, organisation and peace-making also move and work across intimacy-geopolitics. They do not simply sit as oppositional to violence, but are in dynamic relation. They may be co-opted by violence and forced to change tactics; they may involve violence, or be used by people who exert other forms of violence in other spaces (Koopman 2005); they may overcome violence in some places at certain times; but peace is always precarious and never an endpoint (Koopman 2011).

Despite this growing recognition, in much geographical analysis violences have been separated out, positioned either as local/everyday or as international/political conflict (Closs Stephens and Vaughan-Williams 2009; Gregory and Pred 2007), a separation that has all sorts of undesirable effects. We build here on recent work that, instead, unpicks and draws connections across different forms of violence and insecurity (e.g. Harker 2011; Katz 2007; Pain 2014, forthcoming; Pain and Smith 2008; Pratt 2012; Staeheli and Nagel 2008; Staeheli and Hammett, 2010).

intimacy-

At this point, we should make clear what we mean by intimacy. It does not simply concern dimensions of life taking place at close quarters, spatially and socially restricted to the self and a few known others. Neither is it restricted to these same relations but with recognition that they stretch across time and space. And neither is it limited to acknowledgement that non-intimate others are frequently involved in intimate relations, for example through the tropes of sex, violence or care. Its framing within this collection emphasises that intimacy constitutes more than these readings, and we unpick the spatial hierarchies that have frequently bounded it in this way. Indeed, previously widespread understandings of intimacy in the social

sciences (for example, that sexual violence is purely or even primarily a matter of interpersonal relations), whether explicit or implicit, in themselves help to sustain oppression.

We suggest that intimacy consists of three intersecting sets of relations, which are fundamental to our framing here. They work simultaneously rather than separately, and must be considered as such when we come to consider particular empirical cases. First, intimacy is a set of spatial relations, stretching from proximate to distant; in this regard, much feminist research has emphasised the household or the body. Secondly, intimacy is a mode of interaction which may also stretch from personal to distant/global; for example, recent work on emotions highlights how subjects reflect, resist or shape wider power relations. And thirdly, intimacy may involve a set of practices, again applying to but also connecting the body and that which is distant; for instance, relations of care frequently traverse the interpersonal, institutional and national realms.

The project of acknowledging and destabilising the connections between intimacy-geopolitics is now well established, troubling apparently mundane phenomena and pointing to their multi-scalar nature. Yet we have a niggling sense of a question not quite answered, as conceptual and empirical emphases have largely been on the constitution of the intimate. Such work problematises 'the geopolitical', and asserts the stretching of intimate spaces, interactions and practices. Often, it pushes as far as people's responses and resistance to geopolitical influence on intimacy. But it has less often focused on understanding the constitution of the geopolitical itself as also and already intimate. The risk with analysis that primarily troubles intimacy, rather than geopolitics, is that geopolitics is verified as primary. This is not a critique of feminist work, rather a restatement of the persistence of a masculine hierarchy of knowledge production (Marston et al 2004; Mountz and Hyndman 2006; Sharp 2009). We wonder whether this makes the marginalisation of feminist contributions more likely, positioning work on intimacy in a supporting role to more important matters (Staeheli et al 2004). Instead, recent feminist writing is posing a further, deeper question: how is intimacy wrapped up in national, global and geopolitical processes and strategizing, international events, policies and territorial claims, so as

to already be a fundamental part of them? Geopolitics is exposed as already created by and consisting of relations and practices of intimacy: the already-there-ness of the intimate as foundational to and within other realms (Bhattacharyya 2008; Hyndman 2010; Pratt and Rosner 2012; Puar 2007).

We can extend this analysis to violence. While many critical geopolitical analyses have emphasised state violence on bodies in different places, and in so doing worked across scale to a certain degree, often this has implied and reinscribed a certain kind of spatial hierarchy that does not acknowledge that the same violences are often already there within the intimate realm. The short essays here are intended to draw out this point, and demonstrate the three sets of intersecting relations in practice. As Pain's essay contends, intimate and international violences are closely related. Not only are state violence and armed conflict experienced as onslaught in the intimate realm in a range of ways (as the essays by Dowler et al, Marshall, Harker and Sharp also show), but intimate violence is foundational to geopolitical dynamics and force. So the simultaneous, multiple workings of violences are essential to revealing how they work. The diffusion of 'geopolitical' violences is achieved through their presence in the intimate, and 'intimate' violences persist precisely because they are rooted in other sites. And at the same time, contestation of violence – through varied practices of resistance and peacemaking by individuals, communities, and social movements and institutions – continuously wind through intimate and global (see Askins' essay). It always does so in relation to violence, and vice versa: resistance to occupation may be met with further violence; feminist campaigns become more vigorous in the face of a backlash that attempts to reiterate the legitimacy of violence. So resistance may undo violence and create further forms at the same time, as Harker suggests. Moreover, as highlighted by the reflections by Sharp, and Pratt and Johnston, the potential epistemic violence of scholarship is wound into a similar set of spatial relations.

What we argue here is that our analysis of violence as geographers is enriched by taking these entwined spatial relations as a starting point: by rotating the usual lens of analysis. Intimacy is seen to stretch, and reaches around its others – those who are non-intimates, the public, the global, the geopolitical – and turns inside-out. This

framing addresses urgent questions currently resonating through political and activist spheres, and it has implications for responses to violence at different sites: which violences receive attention and resourcing, and from whom? How does their everyday framing as intimate *or* geopolitical work to sustain them?

geopolitics-

The essays each address an issue for geopolitics within a particular context. Using qualitative, ethnographic and participatory methodologies, the authors' carefully situated research draws out the complexity of cross-cutting connections and relations of geopolitics to intimacy and violence. Together, the essays reflect our framework of three intersecting sets of relations: intimacy-geopolitics as a spatial relation, a mode of interaction, and a set of practices.

intimacy-geopolitics as a spatial relation

First, all seven essays illustrate the entanglement and indivisibility of proximate and distant spaces. Dowler et al provide a framing piece, exploring the utility of three feminist visualizations for intimacy-geopolitics across three case studies of research in Liberia, Iran and the USA. These help to map complex spatial relations between citizens, activists, the military, states and the international community. The essays by Marshall and Harker attend to the position of personal relationships in relation to the intimate work of occupation by the state in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, paying particular attention to the intimate as a resource in resistance and alternative ways of living. In parallel, Pain connects intimate dynamics across domestic violence, international warfare, online and institutional violence. Sharp explores the dilemma of bringing to light hidden sexual and racist violence in narratives about independence struggles in Tanzania. Modelling the conceptual principle in her essay, Askins works from the intimate outwards, exploring the relation between dominant national discourses about migration to the UK and interpersonal relationships. Pratt and Johnston's essay focuses on the transnational movement of academic narratives between places that are differently positioned, both within global hierarchies and the stories that we tell as researchers and activists.

intimacy-geopolitics as modes of interaction

The second theme is the potential for feelings and interpersonal relationships to effect political change at other scales. Here intimacy-geopolitics is used effectively to articulate the inseparability of politics from emotional geographies. Dowler et al describe how emotional and embodied experiences of peace connect to action at a range of scales. Pain's emphasis is on the emotional dynamics that are present across a range of gendered violences at different scales. Askins examines the working of intimacy in forms of activism, arguing that a transformative geopolitics arises from the friendship between a locally born and a migrant woman in England; such 'emotional citizenry' has potential to challenge and reshape political discourses. Marshall asks how love functions in political struggle, both as a counter-veiling force for resistance and one that occupiers attempt to co-opt. Harker too makes clear the ambivalence of Butler's ethic of cohabitation as a conceptual resource for living with others.

intimacy-geopolitics as sets of practices

Thirdly, the essays demonstrate how certain bodily and social intimate practices traverse sites and scales. The last two essays critically appraise our own practices as researchers exploring intimacy-geopolitics. As the essays by Sharp, and Pratt and Johnston, make clear, if the task is to move out conceptually and methodologically from intimacy itself, this involves disclosure and exposing the lives of others, raising significant questions of ethics and power. Their projects employ specific epistemologies and methods in an effort to dismantle the customary divides of intimacy-geopolitics, both between fields, scales and sites, and between researchers, activists and communities. Sharp considers the ethics of pursuing intimate stories as researchers, particularly in cross-cultural contexts, and from their experience of staging a testimonial play, Pratt and Johnston ask whether scholarly narratives can have transnational resonance rather than universalise.

The goal of all these analyses is to rotate the usual framing of intimacy-geopolitics, to exceed any spatial hierarchy in its relation, and to rethink it as variously configured spatial relations, interactions and practices in particular places. Intimacy

is not simply the terrain upon which broader sets of power relations are written. It is already out there, quietly working to produce domination as well as resistance across all practices and sites.

Notes

¹The term intimacy-geopolitics redresses the usual emphasis on the geopolitical as primary in these relations. The hyphen signals the supposed divide and the actual concomitance between them.

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